

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of fixing vertebrae of a patient together at a surgical site, the method comprising the steps of:

- inserting a cannula into the patient;
- inserting a first fixation element through the cannula and securing the first fixation element to a first vertebra;
- inserting a second fixation element through the cannula and securing the second fixation element to a second vertebra; and
- inserting a third fixation element through the cannula and securing the third fixation element to the first and second fixation elements.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of positioning an endoscope in the cannula to provide a view of the activity at the surgical site.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

- removing a disk from between the first and second vertebrae;
- cleaning the area of the surgical site;
- positioning a fusion device between the first and second vertebrae by moving the fusion device through the cannula; and
- positioning bone graft tissue in and around the surgical site by moving bone graft tissue through the cannula.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of cutting away tissue at the surgical site using a cutting instrument.

5. A method of fixing vertebrae of a patient together at a surgical site, the method comprising the steps of:

- inserting a cannula into the patient;
- moving a fusion device through the cannula and inserting the fusion device between first and second vertebrae of the patient;
- inserting a first fixation element through the cannula and securing the first fixation element to a first vertebra;

inserting a second fixation element through the cannula and securing the second fixation element to a second vertebra; and

inserting a third fixation element through the cannula and securing the third fixation element to the first and second fixation elements.

6. The method of claim 7, further comprising the step of inserting a tissue retractor into the cannula and shielding tissue at the surgical site.

7. A method of fixing vertebrae of a patient together at a surgical site, the method comprising the steps of:

inserting a cannula into the patient;

expanding the cannula;

inserting a first fixation element through the cannula and securing the first fixation element to a first vertebra;

inserting a second fixation element through the cannula and securing the second fixation element to a second vertebra;

inserting a third fixation element through the cannula and securing the third fixation element to the first and second fixation elements.

8. The method of claim 7, further comprising the step of shifting the cannula in the body to position the cannula at a desired location in the body.